

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

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MARKEY OUTRAGED BY BUSH ADMINISTRATION SUPPRESSION OF STUDY SHOWING HEALTH BENEFITS OF MERCURY POLLUTION CONTROLS

Washington, DC: Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, today responded to a Washington Post article that revealed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suppressed findings from an agency-funded study because the study's conclusions were damaging to its mercury emissions Rule, which was released last week. The study suppressed by EPA reportedly would have required the agency to consider tighter controls on mercury emissions from power plants.

"I am outraged that the Environmental Protection Agency would suppress this report," commented Rep. Markey. "EPA used to stand for Environmental Protection Agency. Now it stands for 'Every Polluter's Ally'. EPA's web site contains a list of its core principles, one of which discusses the 'recognition of benefits and costs' in its rule-making. Unfortunately, although EPA scientists recognized what the full health benefits of forcing corporate polluters to clean up their harmful emissions would be, the agency chose to ignore them in favor of industry priorities."

The mercury rule has been widely criticized because of its lax controls over mercury emissions from power plants that are far less stringent than what would be required under existing law. EPA claimed stricter controls were not feasible because the cost to industry would be far greater than the health benefits the rule provided; however, findings from the suppressed study estimated that the health benefits of controlling domestic mercury emissions would be 100 times greater than what EPA had previously reported. Moreover, commercially available technologies that are in place at some power plants today are able to reduce mercury emissions by more than 90%. If the existing Clean Air Act provisions were merely enforced in the absence of this new rule, mercury emissions would be less than 5 tons per year by 2008. EPA's new rule would result in a reduction to 15 tons per year sometime after 2020.

"From the time the details of this rule first became public, it was clear that the Bush Administration was conducting an industry giveaway - a rule written to cater to the interests of polluters, not to promote public health," said Rep. Markey. "Now we're seeing that it is even worse than we initially thought. This is unacceptable," Rep. Markey concluded.